

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 1952

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN: INTERIM REPORT

REF: (A) LAGOS 1422, (B) 77 LAGOS A-114, (C) 77 LAGOS 13991

SUMMARY: FEDECO AND LAGOS STATE ELECTORAL OFFICIALS
INSIST THE REGISTRATION DRIVE IS OVERCOMING INITIAL
LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS. THEY REPORT APATHY IS THE
BIGGEST PROBLEM AND MAY LIMIT REGISTRATION TO 40-
45 PERCENT OF ADULT POPULATION. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEBRUARY 14, EMBASSY OFFICER MET WITH FEDERAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION CHAIRMAN, CHIEF MICHAEL ANI,
AND WITH LAGOS STATE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OFFICIALS FOR
STATUS REPORT ON NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN.
ACCORDING TO THEIR REPORTS THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH BEGAN
ON JANUARY 14 AND IS SLATED TO END ON FEBRUARY 28,
IS AT LAST OVERCOMING ITS MANY LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS.

2. CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OF LAGOS STATE REGISTRATION
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CAMPAIGN, L. B. DASILVA, REPORTED THAT THE REGISTRATION
DRIVE WAS NOW FINALLY MAKING PROGRESS. DESILVA, A POLITICAL
SCIENCE GRADUATE OF UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, SAID THAT THE
INITIAL LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS WERE BEING OVERCOME BUT IT
HAD BEEN NECESSARY TO HIRE 'HUNDRED' OF ADDITIONAL
REGISTRATION WORKERS.

3. DASILVA SAID THAT, AS OF FEBRUARY 3, APPROXIMATELY 900,000 VOTERS HAD BEEN REGISTERED IN LAGOS STATE. BY THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN, HE EXPECTS THE TOTAL TO REACH TWO MILLION, ABOUT 40-45 PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE ADULTS IN LAGOS STATE. DASILVA HAD INITIALLY HOPED THE FIGURE WOULD REACH 60-70 PERCENT. THE SHORTFALL IN HIS VIEW IS A RESULT OF LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS AS WELL AS A HIGH DEGREE OF APATHY.

4. DASILVA STRESSED THE APATHY PROBLEM SAYING THE 'TRADITIONAL NONCHALENCE OF NIGERIANS' CLEARLY EXTENDS TO POLITICS. HE HAD REPORTS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE REFUSING TO REGISTER AND SAYING THAT THEY SIMPLY DID NOT CARE ABOUT POLITICS. PEOPLE WHO AGGRESSIVELY REJECT THE REGISTRATION WORKERS ARE, HOWEVER, FEW IN NUMBER ALTHOUGH THERE WERE REPORTS OF PEOPLE SETTING DOGS ON REGISTRATION WORKERS.

5. BADAGRY LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECRETARY, Y.A.O. SANNI, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE WESTERN PART OF LAGOS STATE, ALSO STRESSED THE APATHY PROBLEM BUT WAS HOPEFUL THAT PEOPLE WOULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER AFTER THE CAMPAIGN WHEN POLITICS START TO HEAT UP. SANNI AND DASILVA BOTH REPORTED THAT THE ELECTORAL ROLL AS IT NOW STANDS IS ABOUT 55 PERCENT MALE. WOMEN ARE LESS INCLINED TO REGISTER AND IN SOME CASES THEIR

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HUSBANDS OPPOSE IT. DASILVA COMMENTED, IN LINE WITH PRESS REPORTS, THAT THE PROBLEM MUST BE MORE SEVERE IN THE NORTH.

6. CHIEF ANI INSISTED THAT ON THE WHOLE THE CAMPAIGN WAS 'VERY SATISFACTORY'. HE COMPLAINED THAT THE PRESS IS BEING TOO NEGATIVE AND SENSATIONALIST IN REPORTING THE LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS. ANI ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD REPORTS OF APATHY FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY BUT FELT IT WAS A PROBLEM OF THE CITIES, IN PARTICULAR LAGOS. IN RURAL AREAS, ON THE CONTRARY, PEOPLE WERE SOMETIMES BEING 'OVERZEALOUS' IN REGISTERING THEMSELVES, TAXING THE RESOURCES OF LOCAL OFFICIALS. (FYI: CHIEF ANI SAID THAT A MEETING OF STATE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONERS WILL TAKE PLACE IN KADUNA ON FEBRUARY 16 TO DRAW UP A STATUS REPORT AND TO DECIDE WHETHER TO EXTEND THE CAMPAIGN. ANI HAS PROMISED US AN UPDATE PLUS PRELIMINARY NATIONAL FIGURES AFTER THAT MEETING. END FYI EASUM

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